



PFAS Frequently Asked Questions

Question: How many PFAS chemicals are there?

Answer: EPA reported 900 new PFAS chemicals were approved through the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) program since 2006. Subject experts have estimated there are over 3000 to 4000 of these chemicals in use globally.

Question: Are all PFAS chemicals posing the same health risks?

Answer: The risks associated with PFAS chemicals are still uncertain, but studies suggest that some may pose a higher risk than others. For example, PFOS is suspected of posing a higher risk than PFOA. However, studies show that most people have been accumulating several different PFAS chemicals in their blood, and the cumulative health impacts of exposure to multiple PFAS chemicals is largely unknown.

Question: Can PFAS be removed from drinking water?

Answer: Yes. There are at-home water treatment technologies already available on the market certified or independently tested to remove certain PFAS chemicals.

In the EPA's National PFAS Action Plan, for individuals concerned about PFAS, the EPA Plan states:

“The EPA recommends contacting your state for a list of laboratories that are certified to test for PFAS using EPA Method 537. If you find PFAS in your drinking water, certain PFAS can be reduced or removed through the use of in-home point-of-use or point-of-entry water filters. It is important to keep in mind that any in-home treatment device should be certified by an independent party.”

Question: Is there a way to validate POU/POE treatment methods?

Answer: WQA is now offering testing and certification for PFOA and PFOS reduction. For more information, please contact goldseal@wqa.org. Other ANSI accredited certification bodies are also offering testing and certification. All bodies use the same ANSI standards for testing and certifying products.

Question: There are thousands of PFAS chemicals, is it possible for a lab to detect when PFAS is in the water and identify which PFAS chemical it is?

Answer: At the 2018 PFAS Summit in Washington D.C., it was reported by the EPA that laboratories with the capability of analyzing for this class of chemicals can identify and report anywhere between 6-39 specific PFAS chemicals.

Question: What actions have states taken to address PFAS in drinking water?

Answer: (refer to PFAS State Regulations Map & spreadsheet)



Question: What studies have been done or are currently ongoing surrounding PFAS in drinking water?

Answer:

Completed Studies (not a full list):

2008 MDH Study: “Performance Evaluation: Removal of Perfluorochemicals (PFC's) with Point-of-Use (POU) Water Treatment Devices”

Minnesota Department of Health conducted a study on technologies to remove PFAS chemicals in drinking water. Worked in collaboration with WQA’s laboratory.

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/wells/waterquality/poudevicefinal.pdf>

2016 Harvard Study: “Detection of PFAS in U.S. Drinking Water Linked to Industrial Sites, Military Fire Training Areas and Wastewater Treatment Plants”

The study found PFAS levels exceeded the federally recommended safety levels in public drinking water supplies for six million people in the U.S.

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/press-releases/toxic-chemicals-drinking-water/>

Ongoing Studies (not a full list):

2018 Water Quality Research Foundation (WQRF) Grant Program: “Emerging Contaminant Removal and Microbial Growth in Membrane Filtration and Activated Carbon Point-of-Use (POU) Systems”

The 2018 WQRF Grant study aims to evaluate the removal of emerging contaminants by POU carbon and RO systems and determine the effects of water quality on performance. The emerging contaminants studied include short-chain PFC’s (PFBS and PFHxS), manganese, uranium and assimilable organic carbon (AOC). It is anticipated that this research will provide performance data on removal efficiencies of representative emerging contaminants, new knowledge on the effects of water quality on the performance of POU systems, and mechanisms of microbial growth. As a result, the industry will be able to develop cost-effective treatment devices to improve water quality and mitigate risks of emerging contaminants in drinking water.

Department of Defense PFAS Study

2018 National Defense Authorization Act requires the Department of Defense (DOD) to carry out a Nationwide study of human health impacts of PFAS chemicals in the environment, including in drinking water.

CDC/ATSDR PFAS Study

2019 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry (ATSDR) announced they will launch an assessment of human exposure to PFAS at communities near current or former military installations. The assessments are expected to begin in 2019 and continue through 2020 and are laying the groundwork for CDC/ATSDR’s future multi-site health study that will look at the relationship between PFAS exposure and health outcomes.

<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2019/p0221-cdc-atsdr-pfas-exposure.html>